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UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 001325

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INL/C , DS, AND WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KCRM](#) [KJUS](#) [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ASEC](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: ALLEGED TEGUCIGALPA LEADER OF MARA SALVATRUCHA  
GANG CAPTURED

1. On June 8, in what local residents described as a "war zone" reminiscent of a wild west shoot-out, Honduran authorities captured the alleged Tegucigalpa leader of the infamous Mara Salvatrucha (MS) gang, Wilmer Joel Cruz Coello, alias "El Micro," only two blocks from the U.S. Embassy compound. PolOff happened to be near the scene of the arrest during the gun battle and sought refuge in a local mall. Cruz, who was on Honduras' "most wanted" list, was sought by authorities for homicide, drug trafficking, car theft, and other activities related to organized crime.

2. Cruz was spotted by undercover police agents leaving a local shopping mall. As agents approached, he fled by car with two other suspects down one of Tegucigalpa's busiest avenues with police in pursuit. After the vehicle's occupants opened fire, a small gun-battle ensued in which police were able to immobilize the suspect's vehicle. Cruz and another alleged MS member, Walter Antonio Chavez, alias "El Blacky," were injured in the gun exchange and were arrested on the spot. Another suspect escaped on foot and is still being sought by Police. No other injuries were reported.

3. Comment: Mara Salvatrucha is one of the most extensive and violent street-gangs in Honduras. The Government of Honduras has been waging an extensive campaign to stem the growth of gangs, going so far as to make gang membership a crime in a controversial anti-gang law. Cruz's capture will bolster this effort. End Comment.  
Palmer